

Psalm 97

Psalm 97: This enthronement psalm reveals the Lord's kingship (verses 1-6), and enunciates its effect on both the wicked (verse 7), and righteous (verses 8-12).

Verses 1-12: The psalmist, though recognizing the Lord's universal rule at the present (verse 9), anticipates a new coming of the Lord to judge the earth. The imagery of the Lord's presence may, in fact, be the basis of some New Testament passages' descriptions of the second coming (compare Matt. 24; Rev. chapter 19). Special emphasis is also placed on the Lord's totally righteous judgments on the world in His kingdom, as well as His obliteration of false religions.

- I. The Announcement of the Reign of the Lord (97:1-2).
- II. The Effect of the Reign of the Lord (97:3-12).
 - A. On His Foes (97:3-9);
 - B. On His Friends (97:10-12).

Verses 1-7: Though many have been made happy in Christ, still there is room. And all have reason to rejoice in Christ's government. There is a depth in his counsels, which we must not pretend to fathom; but still righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne. Christ's government, though it might be matter of joy to all, will yet be a matter of terror to some. But it is their own fault that it is so. The most resolute and daring opposition will be baffled at the presence of the Lord. And the Lord Jesus will before long come, and put an end to idol worship of every kind.

Psalm 97:1 "The LORD reigneth; let the earth rejoice; let the multitude of isles be glad [thereof]."

"The Lord reigneth" is the watchword of this psalm (47:8; 93:1; 96:10; 99:1; 146:10). It is the foundation of God's kingdom and will be the fulfillment of the millennial kingdom. His saints draw comfort from these words.

"Multitude of Isles": Refers to all the continents, as well as islands of the world (compare Isa. 42:10; Dan. 2:34-35, 44; Zech. 14:9).

Jesus has come and set up His kingdom, and all the earth should rejoice and be glad. Jesus brings perfect peace to the nations of the earth. All power has been given to Him in heaven and earth. That at the name of Jesus, every knee will bow and every tongue confess. The Christians will rejoice with great joy. The only ones who will not be happy with this, will be the ones who have totally rejected Him. This is when there will be peace throughout all the land.

"Isles be glad", just means all the nations everywhere, even though they are across the sea.

Psalm 97:2 "Clouds and darkness [are] round about him: righteousness and judgment [are] the habitation of his throne."

“Clouds and darkness”: Such a description emphasizes the terrifying effect of the Lord’s presence, both in the past (Exodus 19:16-18), and in the future Day of the Lord (Joel 2:2; Zeph. 1:15; Matt. 24:29-30).

Jesus is the Light of the world. Whether this means that He is a Light in a darkened world, or whether it means that a cloud must surround Him, I am not sure. We do know that in this wicked world, there is great darkness surrounding the church on every side. The church has the Light of Jesus. It has always interested me that even Moses, coming from the presence of God, had his head so bright that he must have his head veiled to keep from blinding the people. We know that the Light of Jesus is so much brighter than that. Perhaps, the Light of Jesus must be seen from the cloud to keep us from being totally blinded by His brightness. We also know that in heaven there is no need for the sun and the moon, because Jesus is the Light. Whatever be the case, the brightness of His glory displays His righteousness and His judgement. God dwelleth in thick darkness to conceal Himself from mankind, lest man be consumed.

Psalm 97:3 "A fire goeth before him, and burneth up his enemies round about."

“Burneth up his enemies” The Lord will utterly destroy His enemies in the future Day of the Lord (compare Zech. 14:12).

We know that our God is a consuming fire. We also know that the gospel of Jesus Christ is a fire that burns out the evil and leaves the good. Whether we are to take this literally or not, I cannot say. We also know that the baptism of John was water, and that the baptism of Jesus was of fire of the Holy Ghost. In the spiritual realm, it would not be too far wrong to say, that the words of the Lord Jesus going before Him could burn up all the evil before Him, and leave just the good. Jesus fights with the two-edged sword that proceeds out of His mouth. The Word set on fire of the Holy Ghost could be what is spoken of here. In the individual life, God will purge the floor with fire.

Psalm 97:4 "His lightnings enlightened the world: the earth saw, and trembled."

“His lightnings”: This is perhaps a reference to the Lord’s awesome and public coming to rule the world (Matt. 24:26-30).

This again, is probably speaking from the spiritual standpoint. We do know that lightnings and thunderings proceed from the throne of God.

Revelation 4:5 "And out of the throne proceeded lightnings and thunderings and voices: and [there were] seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God."

Matthew 28:3 "His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow:"

It is from the light of Jesus, that the gospel has grown around the world. We know that the source of all Light is Jesus. You cannot even look at the sun directly, so you know the sun pales in comparison to the Light of the Son. You can easily see how a look at the source of all Light, would frighten you.

Psalm 97:5 "The hills melted like wax at the presence of the LORD, at the presence of the Lord of the whole earth."

“Hills melted”: At the coming of the Lord, the mountains will fade away (compare Isa. 40:3-5; Zech. 14:4, 10).

Again I would say, I do not know whether this is speaking of literal mountains that will melt like wax at the presence of the source of all Light, or whether this is speaking of mountains of problems that will disappear at His presence. We do know that this light is so great that nothing can withstand it. I would tend to believe that this is speaking of problems, that will disappear when the knowledge of God fills the earth.

Psalm 97:6 "The heavens declare his righteousness, and all the people see his glory."

His justice in punishing his enemies. The lightning and the thunder in the heavens, the tokens of his wrath, and instruments of it. His wrath itself, which is revealed from heaven (Rom. 1:18). Or the inhabitants of heaven, as Aben Ezra. The angels of heaven; so the Targum. "The angels on high (or of heaven, as in the king's Bible), declare his righteousness" (see Rev. 16:5). It is true of the ministers of the Gospel, who are Christ's angels or messengers. Men of heavenly gifts and grace, whose work it is to declare the justifying righteousness of Christ. Which is revealed in the Gospel from faith to faith, and which is therefore called the word of righteousness, and the ministration of it (Rom. 1:17).

"And all the people see his glory": The glory of his justice in the destruction of his enemies. The glory of his power and grace in the salvation of his chosen. The glory of God in the face of Christ. The glory of Christ himself, as the only begotten of the Father. The glory of his person, office, grace, and righteousness, in the glass of the Gospel. The glory and honor he is now crowned with in heaven. And all the people, even all the chosen, redeemed, and called people, shall behold his glory to all eternity. It seems chiefly to respect the revelation of his glory, and his people's view of it at his first coming (see Isa. 60:5).

Man's sin has brought near destruction to the whole earth, and this is possibly speaking of the truth of Almighty God restoring the earth and its people. Even now, before all of this has been revealed, we have nothing to do but look into a clear night sky and see His glory all around us. The order of the entire universe speaks of His great righteousness and wisdom.

Verses 7-12: Those who worship idols are “confounded”, while the worshipers of the Lord are made “glad”. With this contrast in mind, the conclusion follows that Israel has a distinct duty to God. Those who rejoice at the coming of the King must even now “love the Lord, hate evil, preserveth”, and “give thanks” (Prov. 8:13).

Psalm 97:7 "Confounded be all they that serve graven images, that boast themselves of idols: worship him, all [ye] gods."

“All ye gods”: No false gods or religions will be allowed in the messianic kingdom (compare Zech. 13:2-3).

The gods of this earth are nothings. They too, must bow down and worship the Creator of this whole universe. When the Lord reveals Himself to all the people, there will be many who will be terribly embarrassed that they worshiped the false gods of this earth.

Verses 8-12: The faithful servants of God may well rejoice and be glad, because he is glorified; and whatever tends to his honor, is his people's pleasure. Care is taken for their safety. But something more is meant than their lives. The Lord will preserve the souls of his saints from sin, from apostasy, and despair, under their greatest trials. He will deliver them out of the hands of the wicked one, and preserve them safe to his heavenly kingdom. And those that rejoice in Christ Jesus, and in his exaltation, have fountains of joy prepared for them. Those that sow in tears, shall reap in joy. Gladness is sure to the upright in heart; the joy of the hypocrite is but for a moment. Sinners tremble, but saints rejoice at God's holiness. As he hates sin, yet freely loves the person of the repentant sinner who believes in Christ, he will make a final separation between the person he loves and the sin he hates, and sanctify his people wholly, body, soul, and spirit.

Psalm 97:8 "Zion heard, and was glad; and the daughters of Judah rejoiced because of thy judgments, O LORD."

"Zion" (see note on Psalm 87:2).

"Because of thy judgements": A major reason for joy and well-being in the messianic kingdom will be the perfectly righteous judgments of Christ on the peoples of the world (compare verses 1-3; also Psalm 48:11; Isa. 11:1-5; Zech. 8:3).

The literal Zion will greatly rejoice, because He will dwell in Jerusalem. The spiritual Zion, the church will rejoice, because we will reign with Him as His subordinates. Daughters of Judah, probably mean each individual believer.

Psalm 97:9 "For thou, LORD, [art] high above all the earth: thou art exalted far above all gods."

Above all the inhabitants of the earth, as the Targum. He is highly exalted above every name, men of the greatest name that is named in the world. He is made higher than the heavens, and the inhabitants of it; and has all power in heaven and earth as Mediator. And as a divine Person, he is the Most high God, as the word "Elion", here used, signifies. And all this lays a foundation for joy and gladness in the saints. Even the dignity of Christ's person, and the exaltation of him in the human nature.

"Thou art exalted far above all gods": Not only the fictitious deities of the Gentiles, or the greatest potentates upon earth. Being made higher than the kings of the earth, who are called gods; but also than the angels in heaven. He is set down at the right hand of God, where they are not, and never were nor shall be. Angels, authorities, and powers, being subject to him (Heb. 1:13).

This will be so evident when the reign of Jesus begins upon the earth. Just the fact of Jesus appearing in the eastern sky, will be evidence enough of who He is. This is not just a local thing.

He is not just a ruler in Israel, but in all the earth. We have discussed before that idols and false gods are nothings. The Creator of everything and everyone, will rule over His creation.

Psalm 97:10 "Ye that love the LORD, hate evil: he preserveth the souls of his saints; he delivereth them out of the hand of the wicked."

“Preserveth the souls of his saints”: Here the doctrine of eternal security is stated. Gratitude for such grace should motivate believers to holiness.

This is for all who truly love the Lord. The Scripture above is saying the same thing. Whatever denomination you are, you are acceptable to God, if you love the Lord. The believer (saints), belong to Him. We have been purchased by His precious blood. He protects His own. He delivered us from the curse of sin, and He will deliver us from our enemies. We believers hate evil, because we know evil separates a man from God. God will totally destroy evil. We hate evil, because our Leader hates evil.

Psalm 97:11 "Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart."

“Light is sown”: This is a poetic way of describing the ultimate triumph of righteousness and the righteous (compare Isa. 58:8, 10; 60:19-20; Mal. 4:2).

The righteous love the light, because they have nothing to hide. My prayer is that the Light of Jesus will light my path that He has chosen for me to walk. I can stay in the path easier, if I can easily see where the path is. Gladness fills our very being, when we are satisfied that we are doing the will of God. This is not just for one believer, but for all who love His appearing. There will be joy unspeakable, when we are in the presence of our blessed Lord.

Psalm 97:12 "Rejoice in the LORD, ye righteous; and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness."

In the word of the Lord, as the Targum. In Christ, the essential Word, in his person, the greatness, glory, and fullness of it. In his righteousness, and in salvation by him, and that always (see Phil. 4:4).

"And give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness": Of his essential holiness, as a divine Person, in which he is glorious, and which appears in all that he has done. And of the holiness of his nature and life, as man and Mediator, which are imputed to his people for their justification. And at the remembrance of that holiness which they have from him, and are made partakers of in sanctification. And at the remembrance of that perfect holiness which they shall have with him in heaven to all eternity. Holiness may also signify his faithfulness in the discharge of his work and office as Mediator, and in the fulfilment of his promises to his people (see note on Psalm 30:4).

Be ye holy for I am holy, is a very interesting statement of God to man. We are not holy, and really never will be. Those of us who are saved, are righteous. We have taken on the righteousness of Christ. Notice in the last part of the verse above, it is His holiness. He set the perfect standard which imperfect man cannot do. Praise God! There is a standard of excellence. We know we can trust Him completely, because He is holy and can not lie. There would be no good news of the gospel, if we could not depend on every word to be true. He is holy and will set

up His reign of holiness on this earth, bringing perfect peace with it. Won't it be wonderful to have no fear at all, because the holiness of God will reign? The word holy means separate and apart. He is not part of the universe; He is the Creator. God is not part of the creation. It is His property. He can restore it, or destroy it whichever He chooses.

Psalm 97 Questions

1. What has happened in verse 1 that would cause rejoicing?
2. Who will be the only ones who will not rejoice?
3. What does, isles be glad, mean?
4. Who is the Light of the world?
5. What surrounds the church today?
6. Who is the Light in the church?
7. Who had his head so bright after a close encounter with God that it had to be covered with a veil?
8. Why is there no need for the sun and moon in heaven?
9. Where does God dwell?
10. Why is this important to man?
11. Our God is a consuming _____.
12. What was the difference in the baptism of John the Baptist and the baptism of Jesus?
13. In the individual life, God will _____ the floor with fire.
14. What effect did His lightnings have on the earth?
15. His countenance was like lightning, and His raiment _____ as _____.
16. Who is the source of all light?
17. What 2 things could verse 5 mean?
18. The _____ declare His righteousness.
19. What has brought near destruction to the whole earth?
20. The order of the universe speaks of what?

21. The gods of this earth are _____.
22. Why will literal Zion rejoice in verse 8?
23. Why will spiritual Zion rejoice?
24. The Creator of all the earth and everyone will rule over His _____.
25. What do those, that love the Lord, hate?
26. Why do the righteous love the light?
27. When will there be joy unspeakable for the believer?
28. Is man holy?
29. Will we ever be holy?
30. If not holy, what are the believers in Christ, that make them acceptable?
31. What does the word holy mean?
32. God is not part of the universe; He is the _____.